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JPR/LS:FVReigersberg:jw  
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

44

DATE: August 19, 1963  
The White House  
4:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Meeting between Senator Duran of  
Chile and the President

PARTICIPANTS: United States

The President  
Mr. Ralph Dungan, Special Assistant to the President  
Mr. Edwin M. Martin, Assistant Secretary, ARA  
Mr. Fernando van Reigersberg, LS Interpreter

~~EXISTS IN:~~

Chile  
Senator Duran  
Ambassador Sergio Gutierrez

Copies To: See last page.

The President indicated his pleasure at having this opportunity to meet Senator Durán and asked for his estimate on the outcome of the forthcoming elections in Chile.

Senator Duran explained that three main groups are vying for the Presidency: the Socialist-Communist group should poll approximately 600,000 votes; the Christian Democratic party (whose vote has been increasing these past years) should be able to poll about 450,000 votes; and the Conservative-Liberal-Radical Front vote is expected to reach 1 million.

The President inquired into the political significance of a close election. In that case the Senator felt that Congress would make the final decision. The Radical Party controls from 57 to 59 percent of the vote in Congress and would therefore select the Radical candidate.

Asked by the President whether he would care to speculate on the Christian Democrat reaction to this possibility, the Senator replied that it was still premature to forecast any definite trend. However, the Christian Democratic Party has begun flirting

Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Country Series,  
Chile, July-November 1963

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with the Socialist-Communist group. Specifically, he referred to the election of the President of the University of Chile, in which the Christian Democrats had supported the FRAP candidate who defeated Sr. Escobar, the Democratic Front candidate, by only eight votes. Senator Duran also criticized the Christian Democratic Party of campaigning on an allegedly strong Catholic position, while constantly justifying Castro. The uninformed, but pious, Chilean **electorate** could interpret this as a Catholic endorsement of Castro-like reforms.

The President expressed amazement and inquired into the rationale for such a policy.

The Senator called attention to the "opening-to-the-left" attitude of the Christian Democrats. However curiously, instead of trying to woo the Socialists away from the Communists, they are trying to attract the Communist group (sic). The Communist party is in a difficult position and needs help. It might, therefore, support a Christian Democratic candidate in the next election, if it believes he can win.

The President indicated interest in Chile because a Communist candidate and the Communist party do not often appear on the ballot. The U.S. would look with favor upon the election of a democratic candidate who would carry out Alliance for Progress reforms in the future.

Senator Duran indicated that if Alliance for Progress projects and programs continue to be carried out at the present level of intensity, or if they are accelerated even further, he will hold a strong political position by the time the next elections take place. He indicated that the three parties supporting him, although sometimes divided as to procedure and strategy, agreed to give him carte blanche in his campaign and to present him to the electorate not as a Democratic Front candidate, but as a "national candidate."

The President stated that he considered the development of Latin America the primary goal of American foreign policy today. The Senator expressed his concern about the fact that after

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signing the limited nuclear test ban treaty, the Soviet Union may intensify its subversive efforts even more and especially in Latin America.

The President wished Senator Duran much success in his forthcoming trip to Europe, hoping that he would convince European Governments to do their share in Latin America's development and also expressed his best wishes for the next year's election.

Senator Duran indicated his grief over the death of the President's third child, and thanked him for giving him an opportunity to exchange views.

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